

## MAINTAINING FORMS

### Academia in and from artistic practice<sup>1</sup>

Selina Blasco

In whatever medium, whatever vocabulary in which it is articulated: art exists only as an assertion of form. However reflectively and analytically it occurs, it is always couched in a form that includes an assertion – the assertion of that form. It is often thought that form creates clarity. That is wrong. Form is clarity that produces disorder! Hence the widespread dread – in art as in thinking – of form. Hence the common decision to opt for the diffuse. Because the diffuse co-operates with lucidity, while assertion of form risks a clarity that does not reveal the extent of actual complexity (...)<sup>2</sup>

Why single out academia<sup>3</sup> as the territory in which, or from which, artistic interventions or practices take place? Who makes this choice? What resources and which forms do they use to do so? And what can we get to know about academia, its spaces, its tools, its agents or what it produces via these practices, even when we try and do something as apparently simple as merely describing it? Where should such practices be placed? What happens if we do so within the debates on the definition and the wider political effectiveness of institutional critique?

Starting with these questions, and following Juan Benet's advice on how best to delimit a new field of interest, I shall gradually attempt to invent a new void. I am prepared, regardless of how successfully, to fling some ideas inside, to try and start filling it<sup>4</sup>.

### The theory incarnate

In one of his first performances, Robert Morris introduces himself to the audience as a professor (figs. 1 and 2). The parody he stages speaks for itself, a key piece when considering the archaeology of today's omnipresent

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<sup>1</sup> This text is the English version of "Mantener las formas. La academia en y desde las prácticas artísticas", a chapter of BLASCO, Selina (ed.) *Investigación artística y universidad. Documentos para un debate*. Madrid: Ediciones Asimétricas, 2013, pp. 11-43, available also here: [http://eprints.ucm.es/27107/1/InvestigacionartisticaUniversidad\\_VVAA.pdf](http://eprints.ucm.es/27107/1/InvestigacionartisticaUniversidad_VVAA.pdf). There is no English version printed.

<sup>2</sup> STEINWEG, Marcus, "The Map of Friendship Between Art and Philosophy", *Thomas Hirschhorn. Establishing a Critical Corpus*, Zurich, 2011, p. 299.

<sup>3</sup> I use the term "academia" in the sense of the official teaching institutions within higher education, art schools and university faculties amid their many different undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. It will continue to appear in the lower case, except in direct quotes when it appears in the upper case.

<sup>4</sup> BENET, Juan *La inspiración y el estilo*, Madrid, Grupo Santillana de Ediciones, 1999, p. 38: "[...] literary work, at first, lacks clauses and problems because it is nothing; the whole thing is a problem created by a vocation whose initial remit is essentially the invention – more than the discovery – of a void which can be solved afterwards, with varying degrees of success, with a specific artifice. The paradox is considerably more notable, due to the fact that nor does this artifice exist beforehand – rather, it has to be invented progressively, bouncing off the edges of a gap that evolves alongside it, starting from one initial moment of trust."



21.3, 1964, script

come on with glasses on  
 2) Watch both hands on stand  
 ICONOGRAPHY IS THAT BRANCH OF THE STUDY OF ART WHICH CONCERNS ITSELF  
 WITH THE SUBJECT MATTER OR MEANINGS OF WORKS OF ART, AS OPPOSED TO THEIR  
 FORM. LET US, THEN, TRY TO DEFINE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN SUBJECT  
 MATTER OR MEANING ON THE ONE HAND, AND FORM ON THE OTHER.  
 Step back - 3  
 Both hands in pockets  
 Bow  
 WHEN AN ACQUAINTANCE GREETES ME ON THE STREET BY REMOVING HIS HAT,  
 WHAT I SEE FROM A FORMAL POINT OF VIEW IS NOTHING BUT THE CHANGE  
 OF CERTAIN DETAILS WITHIN A CONFIGURATION FORMING PART OF THE GENERAL  
 PATTERN OF COLOR, LINES AND VOLUMES WHICH CONSTITUTES MY WORLD OF  
 VISION. WHEN I IDENTIFY, AS I AUTOMATICALLY DO, THIS CONFIGURATION  
 AS OBJECT (GENTLEMAN), AND THE CHANGE OF DETAIL AS AN EVENT (HAT  
 REMOVING), I HAVE ALREADY OVERSTEPPED THE LIMITS OF PURELY FORMAL  
 PERCEPTION AND ENTERED A FIRST SPHERE OF SUBJECT MATTER OR MEANING.  
 THE MEANING THUS PERCEIVED IS OF AN ELEMENTARY AND EASILY UNDERSTANDABLE  
 NATURE, AND WE SHALL CALL IT THE FACTUAL MEANING; IT IS APPREHENDED  
 BY SIMPLY IDENTIFYING CERTAIN VISIBLE FORMS WITH CERTAIN OBJECTS

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*Lecture Performances*<sup>5</sup>. First of all, the title, 21.3, appears to be a nod to those enigmatic numbers which *describe* the subjects in university courses<sup>6</sup>. Also, the props: not so much his formal attire, but rather the lectern, the microphone, the jug and the glass of water. And above all, the lecture itself. Morris, a pioneering conceptual artist and among the earliest generations of artists who went to university, explains art. He does so using mannerisms which *do not belong to him*. Of course, he does not describe workshop techniques. Being a performance artist, nor does he stick to his own specific medium – as Esther Ferrer did several years later (fig.3)<sup>7</sup>. He does not show any diagrams (drawings, essentially), nor any kind of visual teaching aid, like those of Maciunas (fig.4) – “learning machines”, he called them – or Baldessari’s *Art Lessons* (figs. 5 and 6)<sup>8</sup>.

And he is not a medium, unlike Beuys, who explains paintings to a dead hare. He’s a professor, within academia, teaching theory. And just like professors who teach theory, he does so using other people’s explanations. In this case, he uses the introduction of Panofsky’s celebrated essay *Iconography and Iconology*.

5 For a general overview, see the exhibition catalogue by JENTJENS, Kathrin et. al., ed. *Lecture Performance*, Berlin, Revolver Publishing, 2009; Milder, Patricia, “Teaching as Art. The Contemporary Lecture Performance”, *A Journal of Performance and Art* PAJ 97, 2011, pp.13-27, [http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/PAJJ\\_a\\_00019](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/PAJJ_a_00019) and FRANK, Rike “When Form Starts Talking: On Lecture-Performances”, *Afterall Journal* 33 (Summer 2013), with some interesting references <http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.33/when-form-starts-talking-on-lecture-performances.1>. From my own experience as a university teacher in the post-Bologna era, I’m intrigued by the rise in ‘lecture performances’ and the decline in the much-reviled ‘masterclasses’. In this regard, and to open up the field of possibilities, it is worth considering the observations made by Brian Dillon about the advantages of consuming masterclasses online: you don’t have to sit through the tedious introductions and opening remarks, nor the suffocating reverential atmosphere created via the audience’s absolute devotion, and, if you’re lucky, you can skip the often futile debates. DILLON, Brian, “Stand and Deliver. What do lectures reveal about the lecturer?”, *Frieze* 101, September 2006, [https://www.frieze.com/issue/article/stand\\_and\\_deliver/](https://www.frieze.com/issue/article/stand_and_deliver/)

6 As suggested by PAICE, Kimberly. “21.3, 1964”, Robert Morris: *The Mind/Body Problem*, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1994, p.160: “He took the title, somewhat mockingly, from a general history of art course he’d taken in Hunter College”. WAGNER, Marianne, “Doing Lectures. Performative Lectures as a framework for artistic action”, JENTJENS, Kathrin, et. al., ed., *Lecture Performance...* op.cit., p.23 says, however, that it refers to duration, in minutes, of the voice recording of Panofsky in which he reads out the text he’d written. Alejandro Simón has pointed out the implications of having such perplexing descriptions of the course contents at the UCM Fine Arts Faculty, and the resulting disorientation it can bring about in the students. See SIMÓN, Alejandro: *Universitario. Trabajo de Fin de Máster del Máster en Investigación en Arte y Creación de la Facultad de Bellas Artes UCM*, June 2013, p. 9 (Available also in

7 In *El arte de la performance, teoría y práctica*, Esther Ferrer gives a lecture in which, despite talking non-stop (as well as gesticulating, taking all her clothes off and playing with various different contraptions), she only says the word ‘performance’ preceded or followed by another word, usually a preposition or an adjective. Fragments of her presentation at Es Baluard Museu d’Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma de Mallorca, on the 26th January 2012, can be seen at <http://vimeo.com/61516168>

8 On *the Expanded Art Diagram* and other subsequent documents, see SCHMIDT-BURKHARDT, Astrit, *Maciunas’ Learning Machines*, Berlin, Free University, 2003. And for the oil paintings called *Art Lesson*, by John Baldessari, completed just when he was starting out as a teacher, see VAN BRUGGEN, Coosje, *John Baldessari*, New York, Rizzoli, 1990, I, pp. 22 and 25.



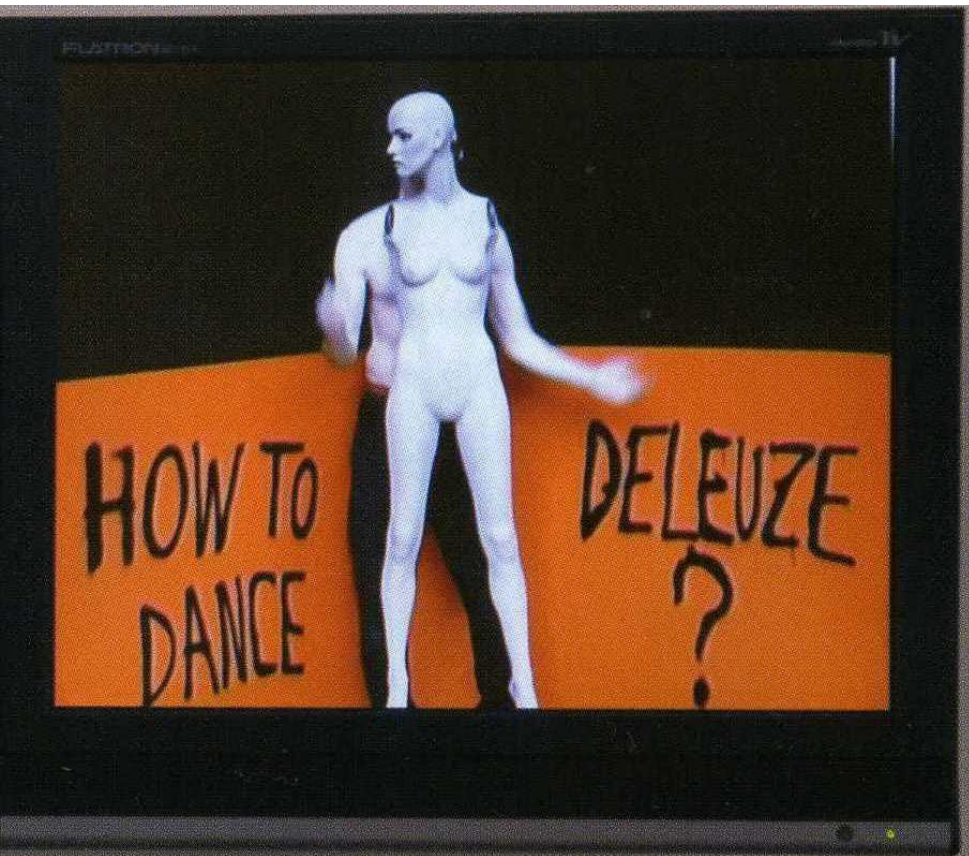
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1. Robert Morris, 21.3, 1964
2. Annotated script for 21.3
3. Esther Ferrer, *El arte de la performance: Teoría y Práctica* ('The Art of Performance: Theory and Practice'), 2012

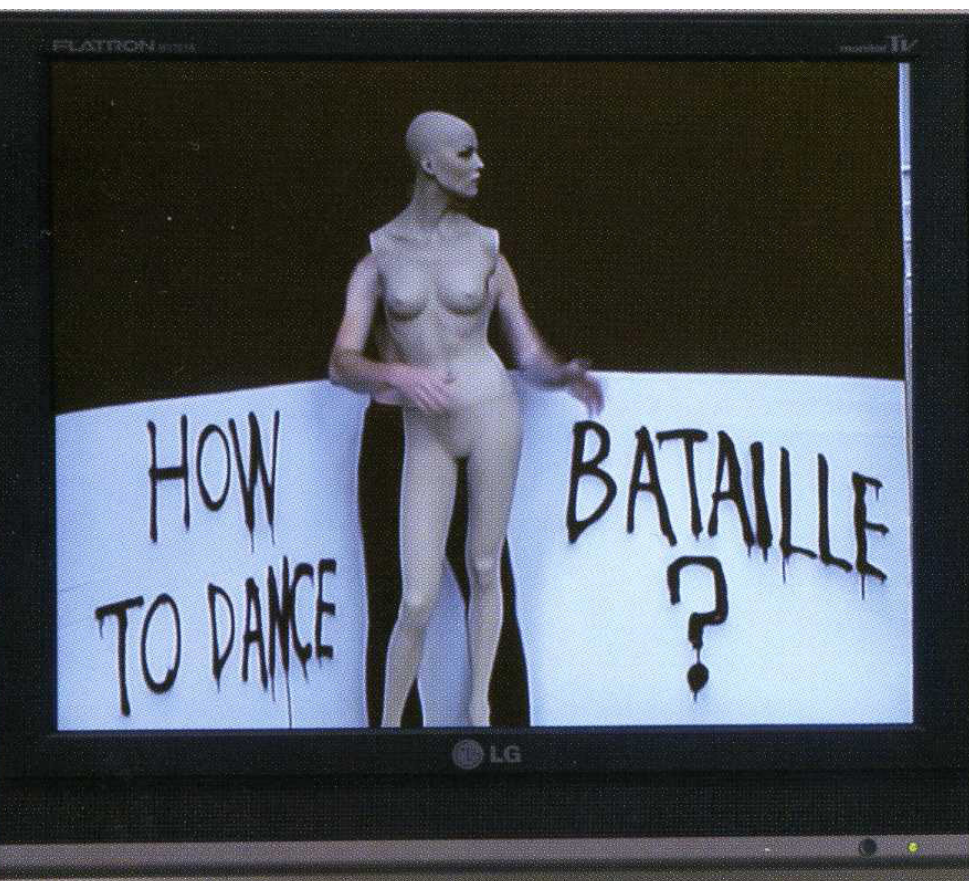








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7. Thomas Hirschhorn, *Dancing Philosophy*, 2012

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Let's overlook the fact that he explains art in 1964 just as it had been explained in 1939, although one of the recurring issues in the debates on the relation between artistic practices and academia, regarding the suitability of the teaching staff, is based on how up-to-date the courses are and, more specifically, to what extent they should be taught from the here-and-now<sup>9</sup>. In this case, the shocking thing was that the movement of Robert Morris's lips did not coincide with the voice of Panofsky as heard by the spectators, thus destroying the supposed value of repetition as an age-old mnemonic to aid learning<sup>10</sup>. This voice was played non-stop, even when the artist's body was looking at the ceiling or drinking water. This malfunction has been interpreted as a knowing use of the resources offered by performance art, from an analytical point of view, as a tool to deactivate the scientific nature of the correspondence between form and content, as defended by the German art historian, at that time a professor exiled to prestigious North American universities. But there is no need to rule out, lurking behind that shoddy lip-synching, the evidence of a certain usurping; it also reveals a teacher who isn't taking his own lesson so seriously.

Thomas Hirschhorn goes even further in his adopting of a disguise, and in using the body. He doesn't use his own body, but rather those of the mannequins with which he works. In *Dancing Philosophy* (2012) he films the movement of four of them, naked and shaken loose, dancing, each one of them an intellectual: Deleuze, Gramsci, Bataille and Spinoza (figs. 7 and 8). Again, a learning dynamic is proposed in which art and theory appear to be related and in which, furthermore, the body is in play. There is a wide range of possible inferences. Despite the fact that a great deal of contemporary dance defends heaviness, perhaps something can be reclaimed from the mystic-romantic clichés, to try and associate it with lightness again. That way, as Badiou put it, by "placing dance in a compact metaphorical network", Hirschhorn's gesture would be associated with a desire – an artistic desire – of transmitting knowledge which is light, playful and naïve.

It should be noted that dance, which is both bird and flight, is also everything that the infant designates. Dance is innocence, because it is a body before the body. It is forgetting, because it is a body that forgets its fetters, its weight. It is a new beginning, because the dancing gesture must always be something like the invention of its own beginning. And it is also play, of course,

<sup>9</sup> PUJOL, Ernesto, "On the Ground: Practical Observations for Regenerating Art Education", MADOFF, Steven Henry, *Art School (propositions for the 21st Century)*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2009, pp. 6-8.

<sup>10</sup> In the *Living Room Festival*, held in Madrid on the 20th and 22nd of December 2012, the artist Isabel de Naverán staged a piece called *Filosofía musical* ("Musical Philosophy") in which, backed by a choir, she sang texts by Bergson, Guattari, Spinoza and Deleuze. The repeating of the same fragments, which could be followed in the booklets she had handed out to the audience, turned into a collective singalong, a spontaneous manifestation of the didactic effectiveness of the school technique of repetition. The piece's subtitle was *The experience of which we are most certain is indisputably our own*.





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9. Joseph Beuys, *Sonne Statt Reagan*, 1982

10. Joseph Beuys, *Celtic +---*, 1970

11. Joseph Beuys, *Ö-Ö Programm*, 1967

12. Beuys leaves the Academy, 1972

13. Joseph Beuys crosses the Rhine in Dusseldorf, on board a canoe, 1973

because dance frees the body from all social mimicry, from all gravity and conformity<sup>11</sup>.

This kind of knowledge isn't out of place within philosophy: in his essay on Nietzsche, Deleuze speaks of the role of the philosopher as being a creator and legislator, a dancer<sup>12</sup>.

### Art is teaching<sup>13</sup>

Although he wasn't a particularly brilliant dancer (fig. 9), the defining artist-teacher is Beuys<sup>14</sup>. "To be a teacher is my greatest work of art" is his famous phrase, from 1969. He carried out this work in many different ways: in the Dusseldorf Fine Arts Academy as a teacher of monumental sculpture in the most conventional sense of the word and attitude, criticising the students' work from a position of authority<sup>15</sup>, as a subversive agent who washes their feet (fig. 10)<sup>16</sup>, or who welcomes new arrivals with barking-like sounds (fig.11)<sup>17</sup>; as the holder of an honorary doctorate<sup>18</sup>; as a mischievous teacher who takes in students rejected from other classes, and as a suspended, then fired, teacher (fig. 12)<sup>19</sup>, who continues to set

11 BADIOU, Alain, 'Dance as a Metaphor for Thought', *Handbook of Inaesthetics*. See: <http://www2.isu.edu/~garijose/Pages/Course%20Syllabi/PDF/Aesthetics/InaestheticsDance.pdf>

12 "To create is to lighten, to unburden life, to invent new possibilities of life. The creator is legislator-dancer". DELEUZE, Gilles, *Pure Immanence. Essays of a Life*, New York, Zone Books, p. 69.

13 For more about this phrase by John Cage, and the relation between his teachings and performance art, see WAGNER, Marianne, op. cit. p.23.

14 Beuys's talents as a dancer can be seen in *Sonne Statt Reagan* (1982), the film recording in which he appears as the lead singer of a band, performing a song which attacks the American president's policies ([http://www.ubu.com/film/beuys\\_sonne.html](http://www.ubu.com/film/beuys_sonne.html)). The most complete study on his activity as a teacher is that by LANGE, Barbara: *Joseph Beuys-Richkräfte einer neuen Gesellschaft: Der Mythos vom Künstler als Gesellschaftsreformer*, Berlin, 1999. See also VERWOERT, Jan "Class Action", *Frieze* 101, september2006, [http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/class\\_action/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/class_action/)

15 RICHTER, Petra, *Mit-neben-gegen. Die Schüler von Joseph Beuys*, Düsseldorf, Richter Verlag, 2000. VERWOERT, Jan, op. cit., explains well the ambivalence and complexity of the artist's position when faced with the authority figure of the teacher, and she cites examples of the kind of critiques Beuys would offer on the students' work.

16 Joseph Beuys, *Celtic +---*, 1970.

17 For more about this action, called *Ö-Ö Programm* (1967), again see VERWOERT, Jan, op. cit. Beuys did this during the matriculation ceremony at the Dusseldorf Academy: holding an axe, he addressed the new students, making odd sounds, for around ten minutes.

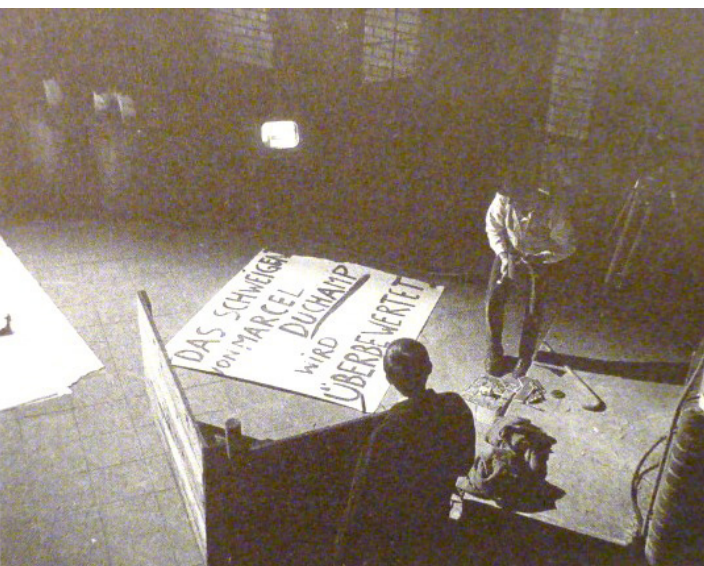
18 Awarded to him in 1976 by the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, in Halifax. ADRIANI, Gotz, "Notas biográficas", *Joseph Beuys*, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 1994, p.26.

19 When teacher-artists act artistically within academia, they are not offering a criticism of the figure of the teacher from the outside, but rather a self-criticism. This is undoubtedly the root of the hostility which Beuys's colleagues felt towards him, the other members of teaching staff who gave him a vote of no confidence. The hostility towards his activism is an excuse. For more details on his complex relationship with the academic authorities, see ADRIANI, Gotz, op. cit. pp.25 onwards and SZEEMAN, Harald, "Academia", *ibid*. pp. 240-241.





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14. The founding of the German Student Party, 1967  
 15. Joseph Beuys, *The Silence of Duchamp is Overrated*, 1964  
 16. Joseph Beuys, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, 1965  
 17. Colloquium in the Dusseldorf Fine Arts Academy, 1967

up schools outside the institution<sup>20</sup>, giving classes on the Rhine, aboard a canoe (fig. 13)<sup>21</sup>; as a political activist who, among many other similar initiatives, creates the *Deutsche Studentenpartei als Metapartei* (German Party for Students as a Meta-party) which he then launches outside its walls (fig. 14)<sup>22</sup>; as a teacher whose job is to explain (be it Duchamp in the history of modernity, or paintings to a dead hare) (figs. 15 and 16); all this, and more:

The human being is a natural, social and free being (...) a fertile creator (...) From this framework, in which he is free and creative, he has to produce models tailor-made for the social sphere (...) to develop useful models for the environment in which he is challenged as a person and as a creator. One such model would be the Academy, and, ultimately, all educational institutions<sup>23</sup>.

Probably due to this constant flurry of activity, and multiplied exponentially by his resistance to writing and his favouring of spoken teaching, in university classes and lectures, conferences and interviews (fig. 17)<sup>24</sup>, Beuys is a reference for many other teacher-artists of his time and afterwards, i.e. those who also reflect, artistically, on academia itself. For example, though there is no need to dismiss the sense of humour which runs throughout many of his works and actions, and which have been mentioned above<sup>25</sup>, Baldessari's work as an artist/teacher is, to a certain extent, an ironic and laidback dialogue (a two-way dialogue, of course) with the German's work.

20 "On the 27th April [1973] Beuys creates, along with Klau Staeck, George Meistermann and Willi Bongard, the *Verein zur Förderung einer freien internationalen Hochschule für Kreativität und interdisziplinäre Forschung* (Association for the Development of a Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Investigation)". ADRIANI, Gotz, op. cit., p.25. In February of the following year, he founds the Free International University, the famous FIU, along with the writer Heinrich Böll.

21 In 1973, Beuys crossed the river in a canoe. "With this symbolic action, on the 20th October, the students hoped to re-establish Beuys in his seat within the Academy". ADRIANI, Gotz, op. cit. p.25.

22 On the 25th June 1971, the *Organisation für direkte Demokratie durch Volksabstimmung* (freie Volksinitiative e.v.), which translates to the *Organisation for Direct Democracy through Referendum* (Free and Popular Initiative, registered association), based in Andeasstrasse 25. This replaces the *German Student Party as Metaparty*. From this point onwards, his scope begins to widen beyond just the problems of academia. See ADRIANI, Gotz, op.cit. p.25.

23 SZEEMAN, Harald, "Academia", in *Joseph Beuys, ibid.*, p.240. Zur idealen Akademie, Gespräch mit J.B." in *Interfunktionen*, 2, 1969, pp. 58-61. More of Beuys's aphorisms on academia, as well as the one which lends its title to this chapter, have been collected there. "It's everywhere...so, in the end, if we think in terms of a utopia, or rather, if we just think, then the whole world will become Academia".

24 WAGNER, Marianne, op. cit. pp.24 and 29, cites SEIDEL, Martin: "Noch immer ein Grenzhall. Der erweiterte Kunstbegriff von Joseph Beuys", in *Kunstforum International* 185, 2007, pp.268-273. She points out that in the Beuys exhibition in the *Hamburger Bahnhof* in Berlin (2008-2009), the artist's voice narrated the visitors' tour thereof.

25 VERWOERT, Jan "Class Action", op. cit., speaks of the "complexity, irreverence and even humour in his artistic and pedagogical work. And WAGNER, Marianne, op. cit., p.24, also considers Beuys's academic-themed actions as part serious, and part mocking.









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bringing to light the “traces of a hidden conflict”. This is what Hito Steyerl does in *The Building* (fig. 23), her famous intervention in the Linz Art Academy (built, during Nazism, under forced labour, whilst its previous inhabitants were persecuted, deprived and murdered). This work forms the core of her text *Aesthetics of Resistance? Artistic Research as Discipline and Conflict*, from which these quotes are taken, and it is among the most widely-read and cited works in the debate on artistic research<sup>30</sup>. She also works on this in *Adorno’s Grey* (fig. 24), a 2012 video installation in which the reconsideration of architectural spaces is this time focussed on the university classroom in Frankfurt, where this philosopher taught his lessons. It was said to be painted grey, a neutral colour which, according to him, was good for holding students’ attention.

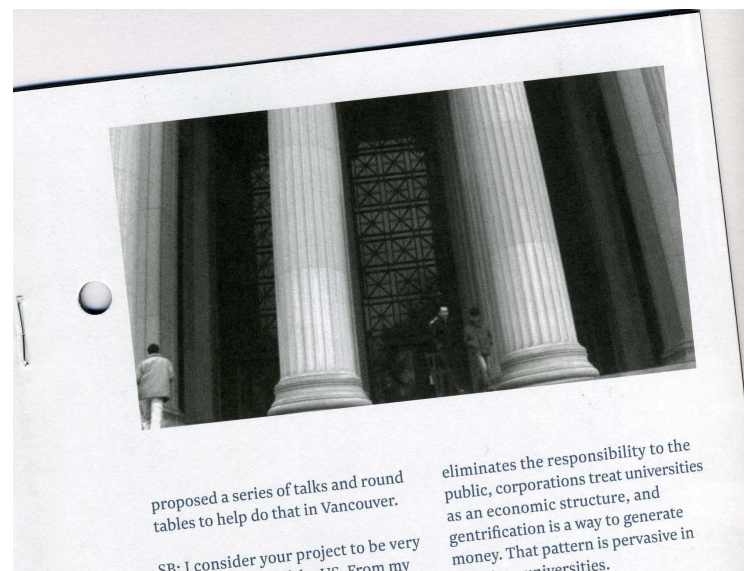
The artist’s observation on how academic buildings can be the starting point for a “sort of institutional metareflection on the contemporary conditions of artistic research as such”<sup>31</sup> can be extended beyond just research, towards the wider and more general field of what is taught inside them, their mechanisms of representation and power, and the management of their assets.

Driven by his curiosity for the very institution in which he works as a teacher, Antoni Muntadas started some time ago a research project called *About Academy* (fig. 25). The project is, in his own words, “an anthropological artefact ripe for activation”, “an instrument to spark debates, particularly in the university context”<sup>32</sup>, in each of his workplaces, generating a specific framework. In this framework, academia is partly represented through spaces (mainly interiors and exteriors of the MIT and Harvard), and projected onto one of the screens that make up the installation<sup>33</sup>. When the curator Sabine Bitter interrogates him about his motives for analysing these spaces, Muntadas replies that “architecture is important: buildings and spaces have a certain definition”. Bitter insists: but why that kind of space, and not others?

You talk about academia as a site that produces knowledge, but that



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23. 23. Hito Steyerl, *The Building*, 2009

24. Hito Steyerl, detail of *Adorno’s Grey*, 2012

25. Antoni Muntadas, detail from a pamphlet published for *About Academy* in the Vancouver exhibition

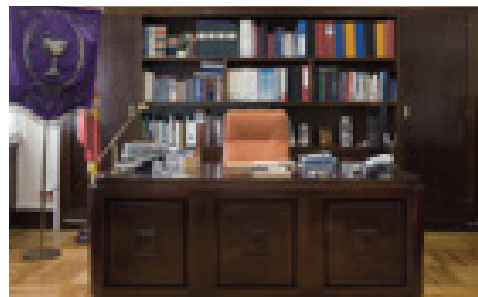
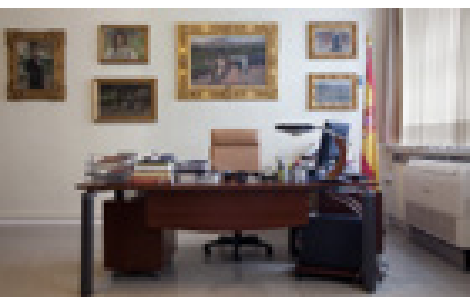
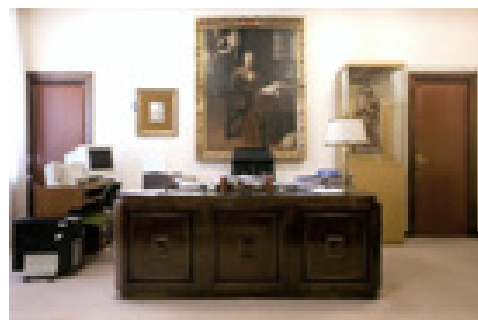
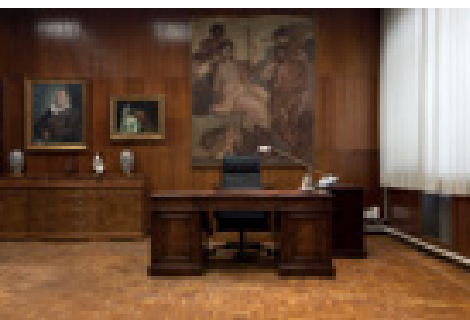
30 STEYERL, Hito, “Aesthetics of Resistance? Artistic Research as Discipline and Conflict,” *MaHKUzine Journal of Artistic Research* #8, 2010. Regarding the twofold nature of Hito Steyerl’s work for *The Building*, SIMÓN, Alejandro, op. cit. p.16, proposes, following the position taken by DÍAZ CUYÁS, José in *Mostrar y demostrar. Arte e investigación*, 2010, [http://issuu.com/piebbaa/docs/mostrar\\_y\\_demostrar.\\_j.d.cuy\\_s?e=4633910/3194379#search](http://issuu.com/piebbaa/docs/mostrar_y_demostrar._j.d.cuy_s?e=4633910/3194379#search), that it is necessary to separate art work and theory, and that “her texts had immediate effect in [the Fine Art Academy], and so, as you can imagine, those of us in the university community made the project go viral. They’re inseparable. The text is also the work of art, and we are still mulling it over today. The debate it generated revealed a scar, one which certain members of the political elite claim has already healed over. This was a great debate at that time in Austria, especially because of the rise of the far-right parties”.

31 STEYERL, Hito. op. cit.

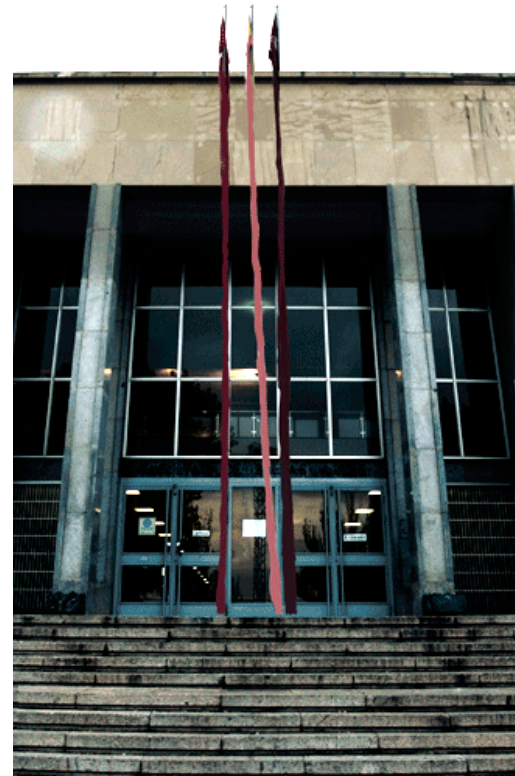
32 BITTER, Sabine, *Muntadas: About Academia*, a pamphlet published to mark the presentation of *About Academia* in the Audain Gallery, Vancouver.

33 There are two other screens, one with dictionary definitions and quotations about academia, taken from his own research on the topic, and another one showing interviews with intellectuals linked with the teaching profession.





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26-31. Marco Godoy, *El poder en escenas* ('The Staging of Power'), 2010

32. Santiago Pinyol, *No hay bandera lo suficientemente larga* ('There's no flag long enough'), 2009

33-34. El Banquete, *Parlamento* ('Parliament'), 2012

also exercises power. Why did you choose to tell the story of academia and the university through the position of teachers and people in powerful positions within the structure of the university, rather than through the position of the people sitting in the classrooms, the students who deal with knowledge in terms of learning?

The artist alleges that, with this project, he wants to "talk about the power structure in the university".

With this same intention, the young artist Marco Godoy elaborated on the definition of the academic space when he was still a student at the Fine Arts Faculty in the Complutense University of Madrid. *The Staging of Power* (El poder en escena, figs. 26-31)<sup>34</sup> depicts the deans' offices in various different university faculties, all from the same angle, laying bare the uniformity of the most representative elements of the furniture and decoration. He shows a stereotype which is more than a philosophy or a position on education and teaching - in fact, it illustrates a hierarchical situation of authority.

Some of the students' artistic actions emphasise the act of intervening in these iconic places within the institution<sup>35</sup>. The façade of the university building, for example. In 2009, as part of a project called *There's no flag long enough* ("No hay bandera lo suficientemente larga"), Santiago Pinyol imagines "a shift in the order; symbols being opened up to time, space, and the moment", by digitally lengthening the institutional flags until they reach the ground (fig.32)<sup>36</sup>. In the action called *Parliament* ("Parlamento"), the collective El Banquete, made up of final-year UCM Fine Arts students, swapped the paper placemats in the bar (the quintessential academic setting for students) for textile ones. After the students had eaten using these new placemats, they gathered them in, sewed them together, and created a flag which was unravelled, not digitally this time, over the faculty's façade on the 26th March 2012 (figs. 33-34)<sup>37</sup>.

Among these temporary interventions, and going against the idea of permanence as highlighted by Marco Godoy's photos, we can place the Atelier by Alejandro Simón, a final-year student at the time. Built in 2011, in one of

34 <http://www.marcogodoy.com/El-poder-en-escenas> See also: [http://www.intransit.es/pdf/marco\\_godoy.pdf](http://www.intransit.es/pdf/marco_godoy.pdf)

35 Here, in this very book, INSÚA LINTRIDIS, Lila, "Encuentros dobles. De la investigación artística y sus mecanismos de validación", p.43, alludes to the photo by José Luis Raymond, *Homenaje al artista desaparecido* (2012; "Homage to the missing artist"), again taken in the office of the Dean of the UCM Fine Arts Faculty.

36 <http://santiago.lapersuasion.com/projects/project-name-22/>

37 <http://colectivoelbanquete.tumblr.com/parlamento>. Since graduating, the up-and-coming collective El Banquete have continued to use academia as a source material and tool for some of their artistic proposals. During September and October 2013, they took residence in the Espacio Trapézio (Madrid), developing their project *La estancia* ("The Stay"). One part was *Parlamento*. *La universidad como cultivo artístico* ("Parliament: The university as an artistic breeding ground"). <http://espaciotrapezio.org/actividades/PARLAMENTO.-La-Universidad-como-cultivo-artistico>





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35. Alejandro Simón, *Atelier*, 2011  
36-38. La Colonia, 2012-2013

the corridors of the Faculty itself (fig. 35), it was an occupied space, temporary, just like the condition of being a student,

(...) a space for individual use (in theory), uneven-looking and ephemeral in nature. We hope to use it to talk about the use of space in our faculty, about the public and the private, appropriation and *squatting*. Claiming back something that's mine, or something that belongs to all of us, thus leading to the question - what could be ours? To criticise the use of the university's spaces, where people are sidelined amid the creation of classrooms of "power" through the occupying of a space which is either "everybody's" or "nobody's". Being in the corridor means this conversation will (literally) come about, among all of the student body<sup>38</sup>.

Not long thereafter, in November 2012, *La Colonia* came into being in the Faculty, as an "open-air classroom and laboratory, considering the agricultural process as a space for thinking" (figs. 36-38). Run by the faculty's own students, as well as people from outside, and coordinated by the former student Fernando García-Dory, it brought together collectives, who usually work independently, as well as administrative staff and teachers. From the open call to help with the first sowing of seeds in the vegetable patch, the focal point for this project, they started with a phrase of Roland Barthes which brings together several threads mentioned in this text: "In the chain of gratification, of knowledge, the object is indifferent, but the subjects pass"<sup>39</sup>. Art can be taught anywhere. Communities, networks; the definition of academia is essentially that of a meeting place. Baldessari held the view – as already mentioned, above – that art cannot be taught. But you can learn together<sup>40</sup>; for example in that place in Los Angeles where the dart landed after being thrown by one of the students at a map of the city<sup>41</sup>. "Ultimately, to teach art means to teach life"<sup>42</sup>.

### Academia: exposition, or exposing itself?

Academia's presence in exhibitions, or the presentation of academia itself as an exhibition, turns academia into a work of art, an artistic work.

38 [http://bellasartes.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/14-2013-02-01-EXTENSION\\_2011.pdf](http://bellasartes.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/14-2013-02-01-EXTENSION_2011.pdf), p.91. The distribution of spaces within academia also depends on each teacher's position in the hierarchy, as they come to "own" their spaces, either literally or metaphorically. This also happens with those who take a more radical position: Beuys retained his workshop in the Dusseldorf Fine Arts Academy even when he'd been fired.

39 Documentation of the activities carried out by *La Colonia* can be consulted at [http://bellasartes.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/14-2013-02-01-EXTENSION\\_2012\\_.pdf](http://bellasartes.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/14-2013-02-01-EXTENSION_2012_.pdf) and in FANZINE.EXT. This project was carried alongside the research and development project *Estrategias de protección del medio natural y recuperación de territorios degradados*.

40 ELKINS, James, *Why Art Cannot be Taught: A Handbook for Art Students*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2001.

41 BALDESSARI, John, and CRAIG MARTIN, Michael, op. cit., p. 48.

42 GROYS, Boris, "Education by infection", MADOFF, Steven Henry, op. cit., p. 27.





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39. Image from Martin Herbert's article, *School's Out*, about the cancellation of Manifesta 6. In *Frieze* magazine, September 2006

It is a complex process, which refuses to be named as such, and so there are many hurdles to leap over, and many intellectual somersaults to learn. Take the case of *Manifesta 6*, which was called off three months before its opening (fig. 39). Anton Vidokle, the artist who was invited to join the team as their curator, explains the reasons why they dismissed the usual dull and meaningless biennial formats, which would lead to them proposing an art school instead<sup>43</sup>. He speaks of setting up projects with the potential for social transformation, away from the standard symbolic gestures. He suggests replacing the exhibition with an educational experience, albeit not in the traditional academic sense, given that they were proposing an independent and temporary school, with no fixed base, no degrees, no official accreditation.

This proposal invites several questions: is this possible? Or, which is essentially the same point, does the exhibition therefore disappear? And furthermore, what does this kind of proposal hope to change? The exhibition format, academia, the public, the students? The project of exhibiting the whole of academia, of nullifying the exhibition by presenting it as a complete artefact and, furthermore, as a work in progress, is highly ambitious. The *Manifesta 6* team managed it to a certain extent, raising awareness of artistic education and stimulating the relevant debate. It did so without any kind of representation or objects, very much in keeping with Vidokle's spirit and his idea that art schools are practically the only place left where experimentation is encouraged, and in which "emphasis is supposedly on process and learning rather than on product"<sup>44</sup>.

The "supposedly" in that phrase is not merely trivial. Not only because the product is invariably the end point for classwork, but also because there are a great deal of artworks which focus on the issue itself of artistic teachings and academia, objects which are indeed included in exhibitional projects<sup>45</sup>. In fact, as with the case of Muntadas mentioned

43 The initial intention was for it to be held in Nicosia in 2006. See <http://www.artinvestigacion.net/2012/05/united-nations-plaza-es-un-proyecto.html> The text *Notes for an Art School* is online at <http://manifesta.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/NotesForAnArtSchool.pdf>. See also <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/letter-from-former-curators-of-manifesta-6/> and HERBERT, Martin, "School's Out", *Frieze* 101, 2006, in which he gives further details about the conflict, which resulted in the cancellation: [https://www.frieze.com/issue/article/schools\\_out/](https://www.frieze.com/issue/article/schools_out/). Other cases of academia being "exposed": VUJANOVIC, Ana and VESIC, Selena, "Performance as research and production of knowledge in art", JENTJENS, Kathrin, *Lecture Performance...* op.cit. p.56, which considers the Documenta 12 magazines project in this regard, a network of 70 art theory publications, from around the world, brought together to exchange texts and organise debates, active in online publications and via publications at the exposition. At the time of writing this text, the 55th Venice Biennale is taking place, in which the Giardinis' exhibition, which has been called "a great exhibition research" by the Biennale's president, Paolo Baratta, has the title *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico* ("The Encyclopaedic Palace"): (<http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/exhibition/baratta/>). Regardless of the nature of the content (see AGUIRRE, Peio, "Bienal de Venecia: ¿enciclopedia, totalidad o simplemente patologia?", A-Desk, 12th June 2013, <http://www.a-desk.org/highlights/Bienalde-Venecia-enciclopedia.html>), the idea of exhibiting knowledge, as evoked by the title, coincides with the arguments considered here.

44 VIDOKLE, Anton, "From Exhibition to School: Notes from Unitednationsplaza", MADOFF, Steven Henry, op. cit., p. 193.

45 In the 55th Venice Biennale, mentioned above, one of the most spectacular places in *Il*





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40. Linarejos Moreno, *Stalker-Cuadrado negro I*, 2008  
41. Jean-Marc Bustamante, *Lumière*, 1991

above, many artistic works in which it is possible to discern this intention only present a part thereof, yet parts which evoke the whole. At the beginning of this text we also mentioned teachers, but we could bring up other agents within academia, other tools for education. Instead of presenting these one-by-one, it would be via a visual and diffuse montage of some of them (depending on how it is done – I follow Aurora Fernández Polanco, here). It would thus be possible to further examine the environment they hope to transform and how much potential they have for doing so.

Classrooms, desks, blackboards and even chalk are the most frequent. Their decorative potential should not be underestimated, and their crushing inevitability is nevertheless striking<sup>46</sup>. Although the formalisation thereof generates nostalgic and somewhat sentimental poetics, they are surely chosen due to their simplicity: their immediate recognition facilitates the intelligibility of any messages that might be associated with them (figs. 40-56).

If the aim is to evoke academia, the most striking thing is the absence of bodies. Bearing in mind that those of the artists act like teachers, and also bearing in mind the kind of interlocutors who, as mentioned above, are chosen to help them share their teachings, this absence can be interpreted as a desire to effectively erase the students. The classrooms are empty; the students are only present via what they leave behind, like the marks scratched into the desks. “Wherever I am, the Academy is”, said Beuys. I, alone, or if anything, with students, but still marking out the steps they are forced to take, as in the image which accompanies Fay Nicolson’s actions, one of which is called *The Perfect Lecture* (fig. 57)<sup>47</sup>.

There are works by artists who are aware of this strategy of purging, works which highlight the conflict in various different formats. As with coming-of-age novels or *Bildungsroman*, at the end of Michael Baers’s story about his hellish voyage around various different teaching institutions, ever in search of the perfect Master’s degree in artistic practice, he remembers himself as being tiny (just one step away from disappearing). This is much like Kowalski in *Ferdynand*, the novel by Witold Gombrowicz, who gets smaller as he goes from maturity to childhood, not the other way round<sup>48</sup>. As with the child who refuses to learn, as featured

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*Palazzo Enciclopedia* is Steiner’s blackboard installation.

46 The image of PowerPoint itself is hardly ever considered. WAGNER, Marianne, op. cit., mentions a publication by the TU Berlin which gathers scientific studies in various different fields of sociology and cultural studies about PowerPoint as a method of communication: *PowerPoint-Präsentationen. Neue Formen der gesellschaftlichen Kommunikation von Wissen*, Konstanz, Bernt Schnettler und Hubert Knoblauch eds., 2007.

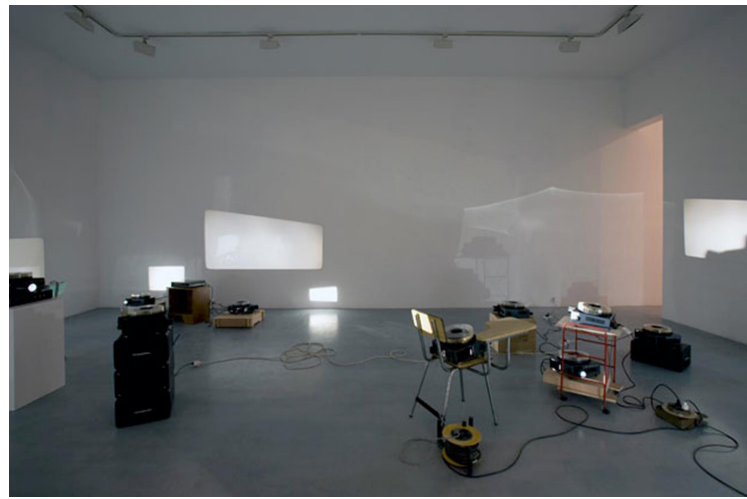
47 <http://perfectlecture.wordpress.com/> and the artist’s intervention in the festival at the Gerrit Reitveld Academy in Amsterdam, *We Are The Time*, 2012, <http://wearethetime.info/wp/>

48 BAERS, Michael, “Inside the Box: Notes From Within the European Artistic Research Debate”, *e-flux* 26, 2011, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/inside-the-box-notes-from-within-the-european-artistic-research-debate/> The names given to some international meetings reflects the reality of the feeling of terror as discussed by Michael Baers. For example: *Who is afraid of master of arts? Symposium of the Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste*, 2006.





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42. Luis Camnitzer, *El aula 'The Classroom'*, 2005
43. Luis Camnitzer, *Cuarta lección sobre Historia del Arte ('Fourth Lesson on the History of Art')*, 1994-2009
44. Thomas Hirschhorn, *An-school*, 2005
45. Ishmael Randall, *Weeks*, 2009
46. Iván Pérez, *La mala hierba. Planes globales ('Weeds. Global Plans')*, 2008
47. Chema Madoz, *Sin título (silla/paleta) ('Untitled (chair/palette)')*, 2009
48. Iván Pérez, *La mala hierba. Planes globales ('Weeds. Global Plans')*, detail, 2008

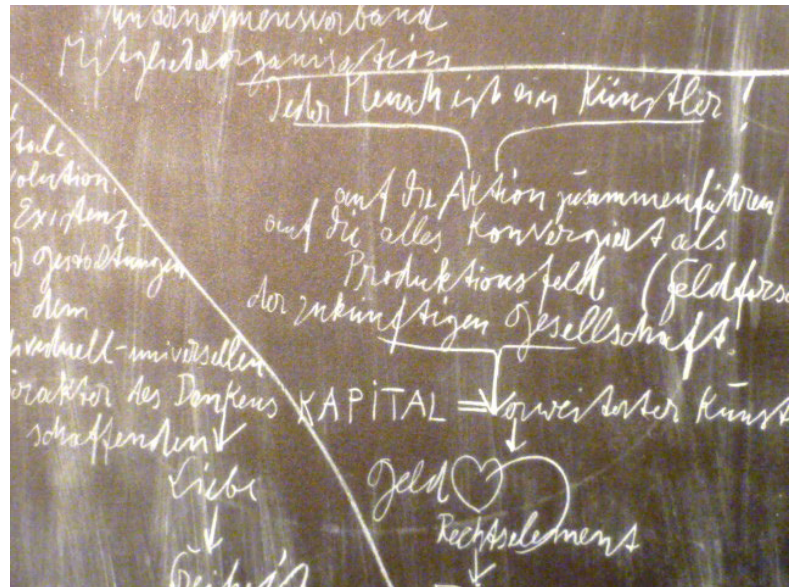


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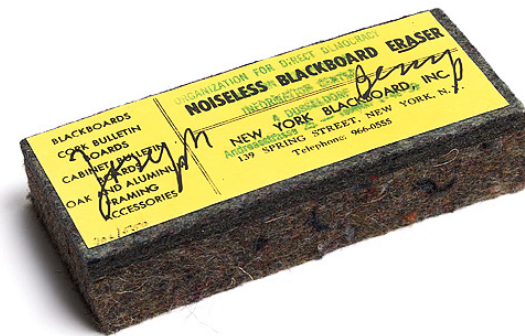




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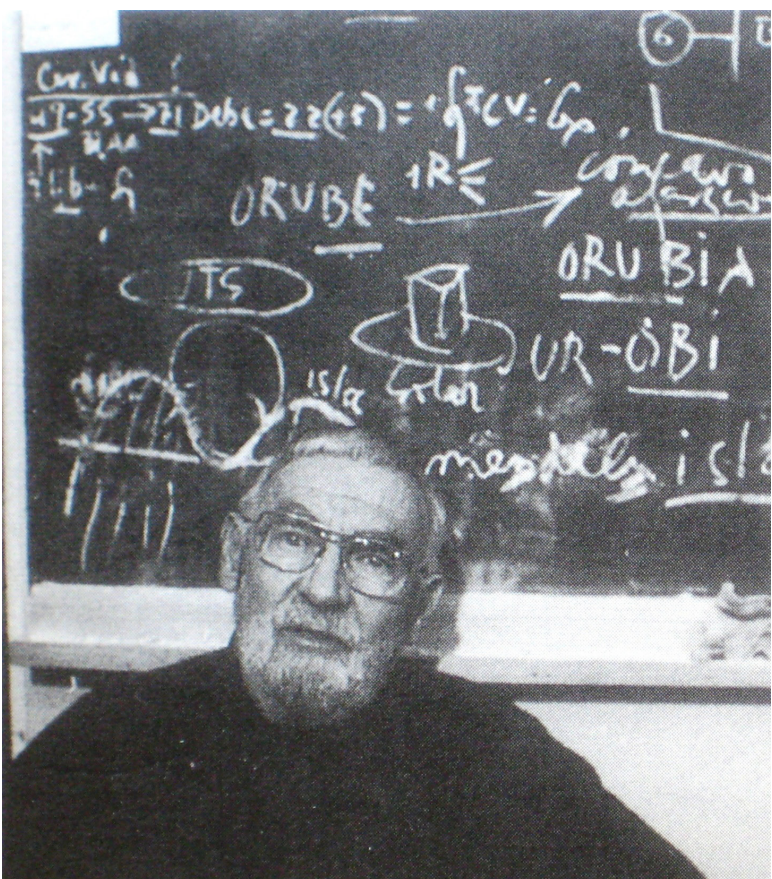
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49. Joseph Beuys installing *Richtkräfte* in the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, 1974-77  
 50. Joseph Beuys, blackboard with *Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler*, 1978  
 51. Jorge Oteiza's blackboard in his workshop  
 52. George Steiner's blackboards in the Palazzo Enciclopedico, 55th Venice Biennale, 2013  
 53. Joseph Beuys, *Noiseless Blackboard Eraser*, 1974  
 54. Sean Lynch, *Beuys (still a discussion)*, 2008  
 55. Nuria Fuster, *Lux 3*, 2006



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56. Fay Nicolson, image from *(In search of) The Perfect Lecture*, 2010-2012

57. Fay Nicolson, image from *Lecture/Performance Marginal Notes//Curricular Documents*, 2012

58. Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, *En rachâchant*, still from the film, 1982

59. Andrea Fraser, *Museum Highlights*, 1989

60. Andrea Fraser, *The Question of Manet's Olympia: Posed and Skirted*, 1989

in the film *En rachachant*, by Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub (fig.58), other artists, as we shall note, prefer to declare their own failure in advance.

Taking into account this implied yet aggressive elimination of the students, together with evidence of destructive practices within works which focus on academia – from vandalised school desks to the more extreme *Anschool*, by Hirschhorn<sup>49</sup> – it is worth considering to what extent the real circumstance is portrayed, i.e. that artistic learning also comes about when one does not work alongside academia, but actively going against it. The need to destroy, and above all, to make this destruction visible, exists because (as Boris Groys points out) the rejection of the art system and the very notion of art as conceived in the modern tradition implies that “the things that are taught in art schools will inevitably be perceived as obsolete by the students”<sup>50</sup>. These things, among others, may be what Tristan Tzara was referring to in the first Dadaist manifesto, when he stated that “there is a great negative work of destruction to be accomplished”.

Destruction as work; the construction of unlearning<sup>51</sup>. What does this task consist of? Arguing in favour of rejecting art schools as a prerequisite for the loneliness which guarantees sincerity and allows the manifestation of the artist's inner self? Regarding these views, Boris Groys repeats that such a conviction is “one of the ancient myths of modernism”<sup>52</sup>. He prefers to draw on Malevich, who is more in tune with contemporary art: “Only boring and weak artists defend their art using the sincerity argument”<sup>53</sup>.

Some of those who are not boring or weak, such as Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri, propose another kind of destructive task, completely different from any other, and furthermore they suggest carrying it out from within research itself. They speak of “escaping identity, rather than finding new categories to subsume oneself under.”<sup>54</sup>. This would only work if they could be convinced that academia really is the setting for research with such destructive tendencies, or if we persisted in trying to bring down the ego. Because as it stands, they consider academia to be a normative place, subject to rules

49 In this exhibition, held in 2005 at the *Bonnefanten Museum* in Maastricht, Hirschhorn brings together works based on the theme of the power structures lurking behind the transmission of knowledge.

50 GROYS, Boris, *Education by infection... op.cit.*, p. 27.

51 FERNÁNDEZ POLANCO, Aurora, “Fabrication Image(s) mon amour”, *Rabih Mroué. Image(s), mon amour. FABRICATIONS*. Madrid, Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, 2013, p.25, gives voice to Benjamin (cfr. BENJAMIN, Walter, *Libro de los pasajes*, Madrid, Akal, 2005, J 57,3) when he speaks of the “destructive rage”, in his case, of allegory.

52 He identifies with Jean François Lyotard, specifically with the ideas he defends in *The Sublime and the Avant-Garde* (1984).

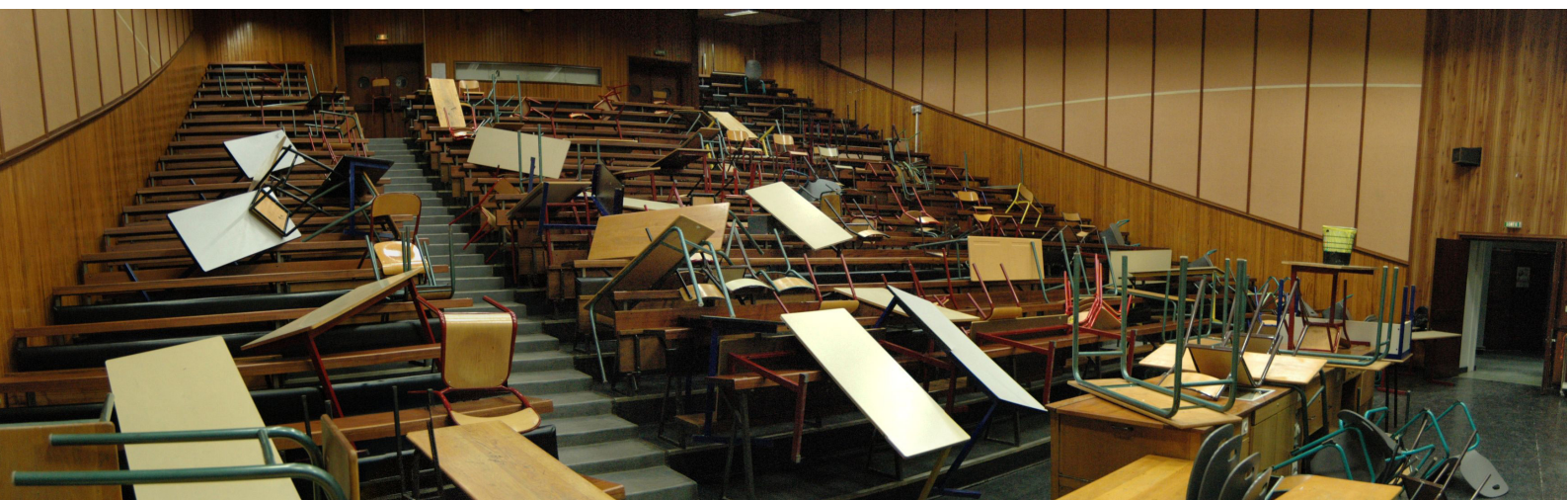
53 GROYS, Boris, *op. cit.*

54 KAILA, Jan and SLAGER, Henk, eds., *Doing research*, Helsinki, Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, 2012, p. 10, <http://www.artresearch.eu/index.php/2012/08/29/doing-research-earn-documenta13/>. It consists of a questionnaire about the workshop and symposium held in Documenta13, September 2012.





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61. Jesús Martínez Oliva, *La escuela del miedo* ('The School of Fear'), 2010  
62. Image of a university classroom during French university strikes in 2009

which impede or hold back this kind of research, instead of fostering it. Daniel Birnbaum also speaks of non-learning, of learning without knowing how, of "getting rid of the clichés about art and the role of artists as an important first step, followed by something constructive, which is far more difficult to specify". He also cites Paul Valéry: "Ignorance is a treasure of infinite price", and teacher-artists like Tobias Rehberger who think, optimistically, that "brushing aside the sedimentary layers can reveal interesting things"<sup>55</sup>.

There are works and actions situated mid-combat, a territory close to those of elimination and destruction. We can specify those of Andrea Fraser, for example, an artist important to bring up here because, though most of her works criticise the museum as an institution, she has also occasionally chosen academia as her target. This allows us to further consider material that deals with the nuances of the institutional critique of academia, which come to light, precisely, through a comparison with the former, i.e. the museum. In the 1980s she played the part of Jane Castleton, a university teacher, in several different actions, among them the famous guided tours of museums (*Museum Highlights*) (fig.59). But perhaps the clearest example here is *The Question of Manet's Olympia: Posed and Skirted* (fig.60), an action carried out along with the V-Girls, in which five women turned up to a history of art class (with Manet's *Olympia* projected onto the wall), parodying a round table discussion in which the role of women in academia was debated, along with the men's position of power both in scientific discourse and linguistic stereotypes<sup>56</sup>.

The school desks which Jesús Martínez Oliva<sup>57</sup> uses to build the barricades in his installations use the scholarly setting as a metaphor (fig. 61):

(...) I tried to put forward a mismatch or a discrepancy between the ideal of a rational, functional and modern school, and yet another series of exterior "pedagogical" frameworks which cast serious doubts on their intended message. On the one hand, the design of the functional furniture brings together some of the most characteristic principles of the modern movement (functionality, clarity, consistency, homogenisation). These designs, as with modern architecture, seem to offer a utopian vision of an ideal, equal society (...) They seem to want to channel the ideal of the school as one of the pillars of modernity and democratic values, an idea already outlined by the thinkers of the Enlightenment, who deemed education one of the key instruments for achieving equality<sup>58</sup>.

55 BIRNBAUM, Daniel, "Teaching Art: Adorno and the Devil", MADOFF, Steven Henry, *Art School...* op. cit., p. 233. He starts by telling a Zen story in which the master teaches without saying anything, and then the student thanks him. He then mentions Baldessari's famous phrase (already quoted, above): "I don't think art can be taught".

56 WAGNER, Marianne, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

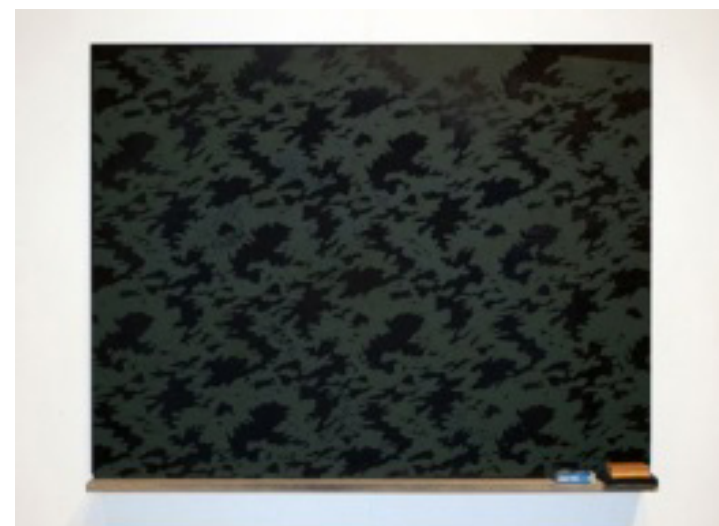
57 Jesús Martínez Oliva has created installations with school desks in various different places, like at the Verónicas church (Murcia, 2005), the Emergency Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2009) and the Pepe Cobo gallery (Madrid, 2010; the exhibition was called *La escuela del miedo*, "The School of Fear").

58 TEJEDA MARTÍN, Isabel, "Entrevista a Jesús Martínez Oliva", *Arte y políticas de identi-*





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63. Santiago Pinyol, *Suspensio* ('Fail'), 2011

64. Brochure of MAC+I, *Máster en Investigación, Arte y Creación* (Fine Arts Faculty, Complutense University Madrid), cover and backcover

65. Santiago Pinyol, *Suspensio*, blackboard detail, 2011

By means of these installations, new versions of those which appeared in the media during the French university strikes in spring 2009 (fig.62)<sup>59</sup>, he carries out interventions which "break with the rigidity, consistency and hierarchical classification as generated in classrooms by the layout of the spaces and their furniture"<sup>60</sup>.

He also speaks of "protesting against a process which may entail the university being absorbed by the productivist logics of capitalism"<sup>61</sup>. He does so in *delocalised* spaces, because they are always artistic, and, again, without students (i.e. they are absent). One of the most over-worked topics about artworks and actions which criticise the institution, i.e. that of the museum, indicates how it can be politically deactivated by means of its insertion into the very context it criticises, with the entailing buckling to the demands of the market, as they become commodities compatible with others which form part of the art system. In theory, it's worth noting, and going back to the previous quote, that the university would not be "absorbed by the productivist logics of capitalism" if it were incorporated into the art market. But these two worlds are undoubtedly coming closer together. It is telling that Anton Vidokle, one of those who took part in the exhibition on education, is among those who formulate this idea, albeit following his negative assessment of the teaching offered in the Master's degrees in artistic practice, calling them "a tool of indoctrination that has had an unprecedented homogenizing effect on artistic practices worldwide". He also calls them tools "to value and legitimize artistic practice through a forced standardization". He detects that

(...) The market of art is not merely a bunch of dealers and cigar-smoking connoisseurs trading exquisite objects for money behind closed doors. Rather, it is a vast and complex international industry of overlapping institutions which jointly produce artworks' economic value and support a wide range of activities and occupations including training, research, development, production, display, documentation, criticism, marketing, promotion, financing, historicizing, publishing, and so forth. The standardization of art greatly simplifies all of these transactions<sup>62</sup>.

With this diagnosis in mind, I would like to wrap up this article by thinking about the experience and the potential for transformation of academia referring to two Master's theses, presented and defended in the Fine Arts Faculty of the Universidad Complutense, where I work. In one of them, its author, Alejandro Simón, says he considers himself a

dad, 2011, pp. 149-155, <http://revistas.um.es/api/article/view/146271>

59 <http://www.sauvonsluniversite.com/spip.php?article2085>

60 TEJEDA MARTÍN, Isabel, *op.cit.*

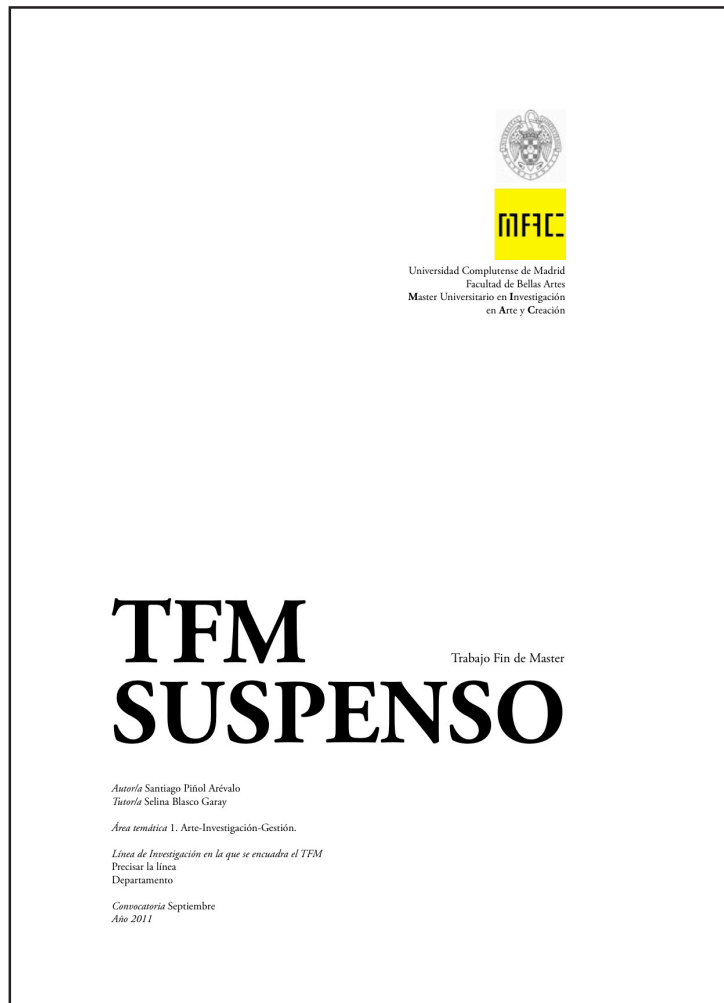
61 *Ibid.*

62 VIDOKLE, Anton, "Art without Market, Art without Education: Political Economy of Art", *e-flux*, 2013, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-without-market-art-without-education-political-economy-of-art/>





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“university student by trade”. His thesis is called *Universitario.Trabajo de Fin de Máster* (fig.66). He presented it in June 2013, and he explains: “I chose this generic title, like a white label, to try and emphasise the figure of the university student by adopting it not only as a figure which eventually becomes professional, but also as a professional in itself”. Also “to contemplate this figure, who, in the case of Fine Arts studies, has to define him or herself as an ‘artist’ or otherwise be stuck at a paradoxical crossroads, an eternal *description* ever aiming for its own *definition*, which is never quite achieved”. He uses Foucault’s story on the academic environment and “knowledge as a means of survival through comprehension”<sup>63</sup> and he throws himself into a research project which aims to “help grasp a better understanding of the very institution that will evaluate this document”.

On the other hand, Santiago Pinyol’s Master’s thesis, *Suspensio* (“Fail”, September 2011) deals with some of the aforementioned tools which give academia further visibility<sup>64</sup>. An installation in which there was a blackboard covered with a camouflage pattern, the kind used to go unseen in a battlefield (or to get stuck into the battle; whatever’s necessary), a crucifix made from sharpened pencils, a plastic hoop and school desks which are not literally combative, but nor are they quite as comfy as they look (figs 63-65). There was also a secret graduation ceremony, with the corresponding certificates, and an exchange grant between a private university and the Complutense. The text consisted of a series of interviews with Mario Opazo, a visual artist from Chile who lives and works in Bogotá, where he has been, at the same time (and this is important, here), both teacher and student of the National University of Colombia.

This project, which by its ‘Fail’ title would have been *interesting* to Beuys<sup>65</sup>, was evaluated somewhat inconsistently, in academic terms at least. On the one hand, the image of the desks was selected for the front page of the official Master’s programme in which he was enrolled. In this regard, he was *outstanding* in relation to his peers, an A+ piece of work. But on the other hand, the academic tribunal which examined him, after some tough criticism, deemed the work pretty good, something like a B, a mark which, given the marks they dish out in that Master’s, is considered nowhere near excellent. For me, these double standards, and the entailed strangeness and perversity, clearly shows how academia acts when those who are criticising it are students themselves (praise the form, penalise the contents).

66. Master’s Final Project of Alejandro Simón, *Universitario Trabajo Fin de Master Universitario*, cover

67. Master’s Final Project of Santiago Pinyol, *Suspensio* (‘Fail’), cover

63 FOUCAULT, Michael, *El yo minimalista y otras conversaciones*, Barcelona, La Marca Editora, 2009.

64 <http://santiago.lapersuasion.com/>

65 “My most interesting students do not come from the group of those who present magnificent portfolios, but rather from the group of those who have failed”. ADRIANI, Götz, op. cit. p.25, cfr. ADRIANI, Götz, KONNERTZ, Winfried, THOMAS, Karin, *Joseph Beuys, Leben und Werk*, Cologne, 1973, p. 146.



By no means do I think that criticism can be neutralised in this way. The condition of being a student, i.e. that it is so far removed – albeit by imposition – from the stereotypical demonstrations of strength, authoritarianism and spectacle, as offered by so many artistic gestures both within and outside of academia, is what makes their output so valuable. It is thus only fair to draw attention to them, to advocate the power for transformation that comes from their very weakness, their temporary state, and their close proximity to the essential experience of life.